



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
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Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, James L. Streeter, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, April 11, 2006

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING - REVISED

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright
Members Absent: Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor Sheets

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

Assistant to the Town Manager Vincent distributed responses to questions raised by Councilor Bond regarding the Visiting Nurse Association, and correspondence from the school architect concerning geothermal energy sources.

Mayor Watson noted that there would not be a quorum next week so the April 18th Town Council meeting is canceled. Town Manager Oefinger asked if the Committee would like to hold a regular meeting on April 25th following consideration of the budget, and noted that if not, there would be no need for a Town Council meeting on May 2nd. A special meeting of the Town Council was previously scheduled for April 26th and could address any resolutions required after tonight's meeting. No decisions were made regarding future meetings.

4. Approval of Minutes

2006-0114 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole of March 25, 2006 and March 28, 2006 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., to adopt.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright
Abstain: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2006-0083 Copp Property Management

Discussed

The Copp Property Board could not be present at tonight's meeting. The next possible date to

meet would be in May. Councilor O'Beirne asked for an update on the Memorandum of Understanding and whether or not it was signed.

2006-0119**FYE 2006 Fourth Quarter Transfers****Discussed**

Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo noted two requested transfers associated with the increase in electricity costs and contribution to the Fleet Fund to cover fuel and repairs.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0041**Senior Center Needs Assessment****Discussed**

The Committee asked staff to put together a cost estimate for the next level of design engineering work. Town Manager Oefinger distributed a handout prepared by Director of Public Works, Gary Schneider. Mr. Schneider explained that Town Council approval is necessary for funding of either the final design development (project completed in May 2010) or the entire project (project completed in May 2009). Mr. Schneider reviewed the time lines for both options. The estimated cost to bring the project through design is \$190,500. There would be a 4.5% increase in costs (\$480,000) associated with adding a year to the project. A total of \$28,300 has been spent to date (\$45,000 was authorized).

Councilor Bartnik asked about breaking the project into multiple referendum questions. Mr. Schneider stated that if the project were designed with that goal in mind, it would be easy to do. Councilor Bond asked if design development would result in more accurate costs and a better ability to break the project down. Mr. Schneider stated yes. Councilor Bond questioned the impact on maintenance costs for the existing facility for both alternatives. Mr. Schneider explained that there are no major improvements programmed for the Senior Center that would be affected by delaying the project one year. Councilor Streeter asked if there are any cost estimates associated with temporarily relocating the programs. Mr. Schneider stated there are no numbers available at this time, because it is a matter of what buildings are available at the time.

Councilor Streeter expressed support for the one-year delay. Councilor Scott supported taking the entire project to referendum in November. He expressed concern with breaking the project into phases and having the building in a constant state of construction. Councilor O'Beirne questioned whether it would be possible to continue to occupy the building during construction. He expressed support for developing final design plans. Councilor Bond agreed. Discussion followed on the two options. The Town Manager suggested that a revised CIP project detail sheet be brought to the Town Council for consideration during the budget process, if the Committee chooses to go with the final design option.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to recommend a resolution authorizing funding to develop final design plans for the Senior Center expansion.

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0115**Homeland Security Grant Funding****HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT FUNDING****Discussed**

Councilor Kolnaski arrived at 7:38 p.m.

Emergency Management Director Joe Sastre explained that the state has asked the Town to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding to utilize homeland security funding. The Town signed an MOU in 2004, but at that time, the State did not require a Town Council Resolution. Due to

changes at the state level, the Homeland Security Grant Program was delayed beyond the expiration date of the MOU (November 2005), which is why there is a new MOU required.

Mr. Sastre provided Councilors with a CD of the Town's Emergency Management Plan.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright
Members Absent: Councilor Sheets

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2005-0290

Groton Community Center

Discussed

Director of Parks and Recreation John Silsby noted the idea of a Community Center was first raised in the 1960s. Councilor Bartinik noted support for discussing this idea to perhaps address the anticipated large capital expenditures associated with the Spicer House. Town Manager Oefinger noted that a presentation on community centers was made to the Council previously, and he would like to bring it back again.

Councilor Bond noted that this was an issue raised during the economic strategic development plan process. She feels it is a good idea, but she expressed concern that the Council is throwing a lot at the taxpayers right now.

Councilor Wright noted that the Kiley property, abutting the Senior Center, was acquired in the 1980s with the idea of putting a community center there.

Councilor Kolnaski noted the need for a pool, but suggested that many people would prefer to have neighborhood programs in the schools since not all kids can get to a central location.

Mr. Silsby stated that the location for a community center will be a big decision. He would not recommend eliminating the senior center. There is a need for a separate facility, although the two could be linked. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of outdoor property associated with the Kiley property.

Councilor Streeter concurred that money will be an issue, but a community center cannot be forgotten. A pool, the arts and culture provide alternatives. With a community center, there is a chance of charging enough for programs to cover the overhead.

Councilor Kolnaski asked if a regular sized pool was considered for the Senior Center, and Mr. Silsby stated that it was not due to cost considerations.

2006-0063

Bus Ordinance Amendment

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Town Attorney has drafted an amended ordinance to restrict all buses. The only item that needs to be determined is the seating capacity of the buses.

Councilor Streeter noted the Town Attorney's recommendation that the Town Council have evidence to support any changes to the ordinance. Since the traffic study was described by numerous residents as "flawed", Councilor Streeter feels it should be repeated. Councilor Scott agreed.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to recommend a resolution authorizing another traffic study.

Mayor Watson noted that there are 22 roads that are affected by this ordinance, not just Pearl Street in Noank. Town Manager Oefinger does not feel the Traffic Authority's study was flawed. He noted that the Town has not been "selectively" enforcing the ordinance; there is a distinction made between types of buses. Town Attorney Carey is recommending that the Town have strong support documentation at the end of the process, which can be developed through the public hearing process. Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Traffic Authority can not produce a traffic engineer's traffic study.

Town Manager Oefinger once again expressed his recommendation that the Town Council clarify the ordinance no matter what the decision is. Councilor Bond asked if a specific ordinance could be adopted for just Pearl Street. Councilor Scott asked how the bus traffic for the two businesses on Pearl Street compares to the delivery truck traffic. Assistant to the Town Manager Vincent noted there are some constitutional issues that would arise from enacting an ordinance for only Pearl Street.

Discussion followed on the original intent of the ordinance. Councilor O'Beirne noted that the traffic study can not be accurate, because the number of buses that would show up with no restrictions in place is not known.

The motion and second were withdrawn.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., to recommend a resolution amending the bus ordinance to prohibit buses with seating capacity over 20.

Discussion followed on adjusting the seating capacity through the public hearing process, and Town Manager Oefinger indicated he would like to review that idea with the Town Attorney. Councilor Scott cannot support the resolution because it penalizes existing businesses and the potential effect on those businesses is unknown.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Wright
Opposed: 3 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Scott and Councilor Streeter

Discussed

Councilor Bond left the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright
Members Absent: Councilor Bond and Councilor Sheets

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Wright, to recommend a resolution setting a public hearing on the ordinance amendment on June 6th.

The motion carried unanimously

2005-0301

Council Goalsetting

COUNCIL GOALSETTING

Discussed

Councilor Bond returned to the meeting.

Councilor Kolnaski stated she cannot support adoption of the goals without a final meeting to discuss them.

Roll Call: Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Scott, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright
Members Absent: Councilor Sheets

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., that this matter be

Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0046

Fiscal Impact Statements for New Programs

Referred

Councilor Wright requested this referral for the Council to adopt a policy for at least the next five years requiring a fiscal impact statement for all requests to the Town Council or RTM for proposals that affect revenues or expenditures. The purpose would be to increase fiscal responsibility and accountability as well as efficiency of Town government.

Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern that a level of work is being applied to Town Operations, which is only 30% of the budget, and not the Board of Education, which may not be legal anyway. The Council already receives most of the information from the Town Manager. Councilor Wright suggested that applying it to the Board of Education should be researched. Councilor O'Beirne noted that some of the information would be difficult to come up with and the mill rate impact would be impossible. Discussion followed.

Councilor Wright indicated she would solicit comments from Councilors. The item was re-referred to the Finance Committee.

2003-0045

Economic/Strategic Plan Update

Discussed

A public information meeting was held on March 30th that will be broadcast on Channel 2 and on line. Comments on the plan should be submitted by April 21st. The next meeting of the Economic Development Strategic Plan Committee is scheduled for May 22nd.

2006-0111

Creation of Groton Historical Society

Recommended for a Resolution

Councilor Streeter has conducted preliminary reviews regarding this issue. He suggested starting a five member ad hoc committee to explore issues such as non-profit status and available facilities. Mr. Streeter has been in touch with existing historical societies. Councilor Wright noted previous discussions about using the Jabez Smith House for a Groton Historical Society. Councilor O'Beirne noted that the relationship of such an entity with the Town must be defined.

Mayor Watson stated he would appoint a committee based on Councilor Streeter's recommendations and staff was directed to prepare a resolution. The Committee should return to the Town Council with a report in approximately six months.

2006-0075

Annual RTM Budget Meeting

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

Councilor Wright would like to reconsider a Groton Code of Ethics on a future Committee of the Whole agenda. She also requested a referral to Committee of the Whole concerning the use of the Town owned property as a temporary parking lot during Fitch High School construction. Councilor Wright feels that Town Council and RTM action, as well as an 8-24 referral to the Planning Commission, are required to authorize the use which has now been approved by the Department of Environmental Program.

Councilor Kolnaski feels Councilor Wright's request is out of order. Mayor Watson feels that we are beyond that point with this project. He added that if three Councilors want the referral, under

the Rules, the Mayor will make it, but otherwise he will not. Councilor O'Beirne noted that the Town Council authorized the letter to DEP asking to use the property for a temporary parking lot and ballfield so the Town Council has already taken action.

Executive Assistant Bresnayan read the resolution that was previously approved by the Council.

Councilor Wright stated that the action doesn't address the use contemplated after the parking lot is removed. She asked if the Town Attorney could issue an opinion regarding the adequacy of that resolution.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that any plans will be brought back to the Town Council. Also, the plan needs to be approved by the Planning Commission as part of site plan approval.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.